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Mr. GREENE'S

FAREWELL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT

M E D W A Y

MARCH 17th, 1793.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A FAREWELL DISCOURSE

TO THE

FIRST CHURCH AND SOCIETY

IN

MEDWAY.

DELIVERED MARCH 17th, 1793.

BY

BENJAMIN GREENE, A.M.

LATE PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

PUBLISHED AT THE DESIRE OF MANY OF THE HEARERS.

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To SUBSCRIBERS,

AS the Author is ſenſible that the feelings of the moment, rather than any merit in the performance, urged you to requeſt a copy of the following Diſcourſes for the preſs; ſo he can truly ſay, that to gratify your wiſhes, is the moſt that he propoſes to himſelf, in conſenting to have them publiſhed.——He wrote them in great haſte, without the leaſt expectation that they ever would be enquired after; but, at your deſire, he gives them to the world; from which he has yet ſomething to hope, but nothing to apprehend.——

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

FAREWELL DISCOURSE.

WITH a heart deeply impreſſed, with a ſerious belief in the divine originality of the chriſtian diſpenſation: Awed, as in the preſence of the dread Sovereign of the univerſe; to whoſe penetrating eye the ſecrets of all hearts are diſcloſed: And ſenſibly affected, by the ſolemnity of the preſent occaſion: I ſhall addreſs you, my chriſtian friends, in the undaunted, though truly pathetic language of the great Apoſtle Paul to the Epheſians.

" But none of theſe things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God.

" And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, ſhall ſee my face no more.

" Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

" For I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God.

" And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are ſanctified."

ACTS xxth chap. 24, 25, 26, 27th, and 32d verſes.

IF any conſiderations were ſufficient to control the angry paſſions and blind prejudices of mankind; to ſubdue the enmity of the human heart; to calm the raging tumults of the troubled breaſt; and cauſe the wrath of man to give place to the tender feelings, and kind affections of friendſhip and brotherly love: ſurely they muſt be thoſe, which are ſuggeſted by that pure and holy religion, which originated in the infinite wiſdom, and boundleſs goodneſs of the Almighty.—Which was publiſhed to a fallen world, by Jehovah's firſt-born; recommended to human obſervation in his own perfect example: Which is ſtill urged upon mankind by the life and converſation of every faithful diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt; And by the powerful, though ſilent pleadings of the holy Spirit; And which has for its only objects, the glory of the ever bleſſed God, and the felicity of his intelligent offspring.

It is the deſign of chriſtianity, to make men benevolent and good here; that they may be happy and glorious hereafter. To accompliſh this all-gracious deſign, the Son of God, for a time, forſook his Father's boſom; and deſcended from his throne, in the higheſt heavens, to the humiliating ſituation of a man deſpiſed upon earth. To every indignity, that the blind malice of an abandoned world could invent, he willingly ſubmitted. Knowing that to teach and inſtruct mankind by his example and doctrines; and by his ſufferings and death to redeem and ſave them;

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were the great and important purpoſes to be gained by his miſſion; he patiently received the full vials of divine wrath, which were prepared for him.

With an uniform ſubmiſſion to his Father's will, and with a ſingle aim to the glory of the Godhead, in the ſalvation of ſinners; he ſteadily purſued the thorny path, which led through every ſpecies of ſuffering and abuſe, from his manger to his croſs. "He was deſpiſed and rejected of men, he was indeed, a man of ſorrow and acquainted with grief." Yet mark his deportment! "He was oppreſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When he ſuffered, he threatened not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly." And when nailed to the accurſed tree; amidſt the inſults of an unfeeling multitude; as he bowed his ſacred head in death, his ſpotleſs ſoul aſcended to the throne of grace, with this fervent ſupplication, for thoſe who ſpilt his blood. "Father, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Such, my friends, was the Maſter whom the Apoſtle was miraculouſly called to ſerve. And ſuch were the examples in patience and reſignation, which were propoſed for his imitation. And the miniſtry which he had received of the Lord Jeſus, was to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God.

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This certainly is a ſacred, and a moſt important truſt. Sufficient to exerciſe the diſtinguiſhed abilities, and to juſtify the zeal of this truly great man, and faithful diſciple of Chriſt.

Next to his divine Maſter, perhaps no individual has ever done more, to promote the dignity and happineſs of human nature, than the Apoſtle Paul. And excepting Chriſt, perhaps no one ever met with more ungrateful returns for all his ſervices and his ſufferings than he did. His hiſtory, commencing with his converſion to chriſtianity, is filled with a ſeries of ſurpriſing exertions in the cauſe of Chriſt; And with affecting repreſentations of the cruel and barbarous treatment he ſuffered from thoſe, whoſe eternal intereſt he endeavoured to promote, at the expenſe of every worldly conſideration. He does himſelf the juſtice to ſay, that he is in nothing a whit behind the chiefeſt Apoſtles. "Are they miniſters of "Chriſt (ſaid he) I am more: in labours more "abundant, in ſtripes above meaſure, in priſons "more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews "five times received I forty ſtripes ſave one. "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I "ſtoned, thrice I ſuffered ſhipwreck, a night and "a day I have been in the deep: In journeying "often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, "in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils "by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils "in the wilderneſs, in perils in the ſea, in perils "amongſt falſe brethren. In wearineſs and pain-

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heart, and req … hatred and revenge ſhould
give place to the grateful emotions of love, charity, mutual forbearance, forgiveneſs and compaſſion: Of that religion, which is not armed with vengeance, to deſtroy the humble penitent; But is ever ready to drop the tear of condolence over the unhappy; and to guide the unwary ſtep into the paths of peace and truth: Of that religion, which has for its objects, the glory of the Deity, and the honour, and the happineſs of all mankind; Which inſpires each individual of its ſincere votaries, with ſuch ardent and diffuſive benevolence, as ſhall draw forth his ſoul to the great Father of all, in this devout addreſs.

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
"To hide the faults I ſee;
"That mercy I to others ſhow,
"That mercy ſhew to me."——

"And now (ſaith the Apoſtle) behold, I go "bound in ſpirit unto Jeruſalem, not knowing the "things that ſhall befal me there. Save that the "holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, ſaying, that "bonds and afflictions abide me." But while the Apoſtle anticipates the evils and dangers attendant on the diſcharge of his miniſtry, he nobly riſes ſuperior to all his apprehenſions; And fired with an heroic ardor, he ſets danger, and even death, in open defiance. "But none of theſe "things move me, neither count I my life dear "unto myſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my courſe

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O happy Apoſtle! Who would not wiſh to emulate thy reſolution, who has a clear proſpect of the rewards that will crown fidelity, in the immediate preſence, and under the almighty protection of thy God? Above the reach of envy; and where the rage of perſecution can never harm thee! Thou haſt fulfilled the miniſtry, which thou didſt receive of thy bleſſed Maſter: Thou haſt faithfully teſtified to a deluded, misjudging world the goſpel of the grace of God. And thou haſt finiſhed thy courſe with joy. For in the near proſpect of death; while on the confines of the eternal world, thou waſt able to look back with ſatisfaction on thy paſt life. And rejoicing in thy proſpects of future glory, thou waſt able to ſay, I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous judge ſhall give me at that day.

But although the Apoſtle Paul has finiſhed his courſe, and is now at reſt in the abodes of bliſs; yet the cauſe, which he ſo ſucceſsfully plead, is not brought to a final iſſue. Nor will it be, until all the wandering tribes of Adam's race are brought home to their father's houſe. Until the children of men ſhall be perſuaded to ſeek one

common

common intereſt; and be united in one happy family. Until the ferocity of the lion ſhall give place to the inoffenſiveneſs of the lamb; and 'the 'leopard ſhall lie down with the kid. When the 'envy of Ephraim ſhall depart, and the adverſaries 'of Judah ſhall be cut off. When Ephraim ſhall 'not envy Judah, and Judah ſhall not vex Ephraim. 'When the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge 'of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea; and 'when there ſhall be nothing to hurt or deſtroy 'in all his holy mountain.' A conſummation this, devoutly to be wiſhed.

In the mean time, the King of Zion continues to ſend his Ambaſſadors to the children of men; and the religion of the Redeemer, has this day an advocate in every honeſt heart.

The faithful miniſters of the goſpel, are the ſucceſſors of St. Paul in the ſervice of the ſame Maſter. Like him they muſt expect to encounter innumerable difficulties; and like him, they muſt reſolve, relying on divine grace, to ſurmount them all. And, in oppoſition to the paſſions and the prejudices of ungodly men, they muſt determine faithfully to diſcharge the duties of their important, and very difficult ſtation.

But alas! how few of thoſe who take upon them the ſacred office of the miniſtry, can affirm with the confidence of the Apoſtle, that they have not in any thing been deficient? Miniſters are but men: ſubject to like paſſions with their fellow mortals: and expoſed to all the frailties and in-

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firmities

firmities of human nature. Perfection is not attainable by them; nor ought it to be expected from them. It is true, however, that the ſacred office which they ſuſtain, places them in an elevated point of view. They are therefore, under peculiar obligations to uſe the utmoſt circumſpection in their converſation and deportment; and to cauſe their light ſo to ſhine before men, that others, ſeeing their good works, may glorify their heavenly Father. Thoſe who are conſtituted ſacred guides to a benighted world, ſhould be careful to have thoſe rays of divine wiſdom and knowledge, which have been communicated to them, from the father of lights, diffuſe their benign influence, on all around them. The miniſtry which they have received of the Lord, ſhould always hold the firſt place in their thoughts; and whatever diſcouragements may avait them, in the execution of their important truſt, they ought never to deſpair. But to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God in their lives and in their preaching, ſhould always be their ſingle aim. Although enemies ſhould perſecute, and friends betray them. Though they ſhould be made the ſcorn and deriſion of the mad multitude. Though poverty and ruin, deſtruction and death ſhould ſtare them in the face; yet none of theſe things ſhould move them, neither ſhould their lives be dear unto themſelves, when ſet in competition with their faith: But with a firm reliance on divine ſupport; and with unſhaken confidence in him, in whoſe cauſe they are engaged: they ſhould not ſhun to declare

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the whole counsel of God, though all the powers of darkness should arise in opposition to it. Animated by the pleasing consideration, that in thus doing, they may finish their course with joy; they will rise above the fear of every disasterous event in this life; and look forward to the hour of death in grateful expectation.

But it must be confessed, that the work of a gospel minister, is difficult and arduous, as well as infinitely important. Our adorable Saviour, having redeemed our fallen race, from the ruins of apostacy, by his own sufferings and death; not only exhibited in his own character, that temper and conduct, which his disciples should imitate: but established his church under special ordinances; and published that system of faith and morals, through which he would have the children of men qualified for the heavenly world. And that mankind might be instructed in the knowledge of the divine will; and be persuaded to embrace him, as the only mediator, through whom they may become reconciled to their offended Maker, receive the pardon of all their sins, and obtain the final and everlasting salvation of their souls: he was graciously pleased to ordain and appoint a succession of gospel teachers; who should bear rule in his church; administer the ordinances of his gospel; impress the seals of his covenant; solemnly warn and exhort in his name; preach him, in his person, character and offices; and declare the whole counsel of God, to the

conviction and converſion of ſinners, and to the edification, comfort and eſtabliſhment of the ſaints. It is therefore the indiſpenſible duty of a goſpel miniſter to watch, that he may be inſtrumental in ſaving ſouls. Great will be his reward, if he is faithful in the diſcharge of his duty; and ſolemn will be the account, which he muſt give to his divine Maſter if he is not. While expoſed to the wicked and malicious diſpoſitions of mankind, he has to conflict with many temptations to forſake Chriſt, and to abandon his cauſe; but they are all confined to the preſent term of his exiſtence: while he has many great and precious promiſes, to encourage him to perſevere in his attachment to the truth, and the intereſts of his Redeemer, which ſhall have their full accompliſhment in the eternal world.

Although the word faithfully preached, will prove the ſavor of life unto life, unto all them who hear and obey it; and a ſavor of death unto death, to thoſe who diſregard it: yet the doctrines of grace and ſalvation by Chriſt; which it is the indiſpenſible duty of a goſpel miniſter to preach; are ſo extremely ungrateful to a great part of mankind; that the preacher is too often made the object of their unrighteous reſentment.

The moſt examplary life, and unblemiſhed character, are not always ſecure from the ſhafts of malice and detraction. With the bittereſt invetetacy the hardened Jews perſecuted the holy Lamb of God; and abuſed him with every term

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of reproach, with which their ingenuity could furniſh them. And when (while they inhumanly ſought his life) our Lord ſaid unto them, many good works have I ſhewed you from my Father, for which of theſe works do ye ſtone me? They made him this unfeeling reply. For a good work we ſtone thee not, but for blaſphemy, and becauſe that thou being a man, makeſt thyſelf God. Implying that he was an infamous impoſtor, endeavouring to practiſe upon the credulity of the multitude. And if theſe things were done in a green tree, what can we expect in a dry? If men have called the maſter of the houſe Beelzebub, how much more will they call thoſe of his houſhold? If he, who is the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, could not paſs through this cenſorious world, without meeting the bittereſt reproaches of thoſe whom he died to ſave, his frail and imperfect diſciples cannot reaſonably expect any thing better.

The moſt faithful ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt that ever exiſted, falls infinitely ſhort of his bleſſed Maſter. Even the moſt vigilant and circumſpect of thoſe who ſuſtain the ſacred office of the goſpel miniſtry have not only abundant occaſion to humble themſelves before God, on account of their numberleſs imperfections; but they likewiſe frequently ſtand in need of the candor and charity of their fellow men.—Of thoſe to whom it is their duty to come, in the name of the Lord, declaring his hatred of all unrighteouſneſs. For who can ſay, I have made my heart clean; I am free

from tranſgreſſion? Could that divine and heavenly principle which ſuffereth long and is kind, which vaunteth not itſelf, and rejoiceth not in iniquity; could that cardinal virtue, which is the baſis of all true religion, maintain the place it merits in the hearts of men, they would be mercileſs only to thoſe errors and imperfections which they find in themſelves. But unhappily for the peace, the harmony and ſecurity of thoſe who ſhould be diſtinguiſhed for the exerciſe of all the chriſtian virtues, they are generally the moſt quickſighted in diſcerning, and the moſt ſevere in cenſuring the faults of others, who need the thickeſt veil to conceal their own.

But ſo long as the mild and gentle ſpirit of chriſtianity ſhall warm the hearts of the wiſe and good; ſo long, ſhall the humble and ſincere, though imperfect ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt, find a place in their eſteem. Wherever he goes, their beſt wiſhes will attend him; and their devout and fervent prayers will be, that God may protect and bleſs him.

Virtuous friendſhip is an exalted paſſion. It is the key that opens to all the ſocial affections. It is the ſecret and delicate, though firm and inſeparable ligament that unites congenial ſouls; and conſtitutes the tendereſt attachments that nature knows. It ſeeketh not its own aggrandizement, but the happineſs of others. It ſets no bounds to its kind and beneficent offices. It begins in virtuous ſouls upon earth, and will be conſummated in heaven.

The full force of this divine paſſion the Apoſtle Paul felt for his beloved Church at Epheſus; and in their breaſts it met a generous return. It was this that cemented their mutual affections, and rendered the thoughts of their ſeparation ſo extremely painful.

But perfect happineſs has no place below the ſkies. Even the joys of virtuous friendſhip are embittered, by the ſad recollection, that the objects of our fondeſt affections muſt ſoon be parted from us.

Behold, the ſhip is already launched; the breeze ariſes, and the canvaſs ſwells; the moment, the affecting moment, is arrived, when Paul muſt take his laſt farewell of his Epheſian friends. His ſoul, which had maintained its firmneſs through all his ſufferings, and nobly roſe ſuperior to all the dangers with which he was threatened, is now ſubdued by love. I ſee his virtuous conflict with all the tender paſſions; while I hear him ſay, Now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, ſhall ſee my face no more.

And while I ſpeak of his attachment to his beloved Church, methinks I feel my heart glow, with the ſame exalted paſſion for thoſe, of whom I ſhall, this day, publicly take my leave. But, as on parting with his friends, Paul recommended them to God, and the word of his grace: So, after his example, and by your indulgence, I wiſh to take my leave of you, my friends, this afternoon.——

PART II.

PART II.

AS the offices and duties of an evangelical teacher are ſolemn and ſacred, ſo the connexion that ſubſiſts between him and the church and people to whom he has ſtatedly adminiſtered the ordinances, and diſpenſed the doctrines of the goſpel, is tender, intereſting and important. They are equally intereſted in all religious truths; they are accountable to the ſame Lord, for their fidelity to each other; for their fidelity to Chriſt, and to the intereſts of his kingdom.

The day is not far diſtant, when every ſervant of the Lord Jeſus muſt give an account of his ſtewardſhip; and when all thoſe who have been favored with the means of grace muſt appear before the tribunal of Jehovah, and ſhew how they have improved under them. Then if he, to whom has been intruſted the miniſtry of the goſpel of the grace of God, ſhall be found to have been faithful to his ſacred truſt, and to the all-important cauſe in which he has been employed: If it ſhall then appear, that he has not ſhunned to declare the whole counſel of God; and that he is pure from the blood of all; he ſhall then be owned, approved and honoured by his divine Maſter, who is his final judge. And an unfading crown of glory in the heavens ſhall reward him for all

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his ſervices and his ſufferings upon earth. Notwithſtanding, while in this ſtate of trial and diſcipline, he may be (as his maſter was before him) deſpiſed and rejected of men, and regarded by ſhort-ſighted mortals, as one who is ſtricken, ſmitten of God and afflicted; and perſecuted by their relentleſs rage even unto ſtrange cities.

Happy is that miniſter of Chriſt, whoſe life has uniformly correſponded with the goſpel he has preached. And happy is that people who have realized the worth of ſuch a faithful ſervant of their aſcended Lord, and obeyed the precepts of the goſpel which he has inculcated. They may look on death without one diſtreſſing apprehenſion. And with unſpeakable ſatisfaction, they can anticipate that ſolemn moment, when they ſhall again unite at the impartial bar of their righteous Judge; receive his applaudit, and accompany each other to thoſe bleſſed abodes where all virtuous friends ſhall meet, and part no more through the unmeaſurable ages of an endleſs eternity. Such a miniſter was the apoſtle Paul, and ſuch were thoſe who compoſed his church at Epheſus. And therefore, while he bids them a long farewell, expecting never more to ſee them upon earth; he can confidently affirm, that he is pure from the blood of all men. And that he has not ſhunned to declare unto them all the counſel of God. This great Apoſtle is an example to his ſucceſſors in ſufferings and in patience; in word, in charity, in faith and in purity. But

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there are but few however of his ſucceſſors, who do not fall ſhort of the example he has ſet them. The height of their pretentions in general is, that they have endeavoured to walk worthy of their high and holy vocation; and that they have not willingly ſhunned to declare all the counſel of God.

This, my friends, is the moſt that I pretend to. Many are the imperfections of my life, and great is my need of pardoning mercy, and renovating grace. With a ſubmiſſive temper of mind, I would notice the diſpenſations of divine providence towards me. And I would aſcribe righteouſneſs to my Maker, under all his dealings with me. I would cultivate and cheriſh the temper of the meek and lowly Jeſus, in which he ſaid to the Roman governor, "Thou couldeſt have no power at all againſt me, except it were given thee from above." And of holy David, when under his ſevereſt trials and afflictions, "Let Shimei curſe, for the Lord hath bidden him." But my friends, I can with confidence appeal to the God who knows my heart, to witneſs the ſincerity of my deſires, to ſerve him with fidelity, in the goſpel of his Son. And that I have not, knowingly, kept back any thing that was profitable unto you, through the fear of man; or under the apprehenſion of incurring the diſpleaſure of thoſe, who do not conceive of ſome of the doctrines of the goſpel in the ſame light with myſelf. It has been my uniform endeavour, to urge upon you all, the neceſſity and the infinite importance of attending

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on the means of grace, and the inſtitutions of our holy religion; to hold up to your view the moral ſentiments and the practical duties of chriſtianity; and to teſtify to all, whatever their ſpeculative opinions might be, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. And if I cannot ſay with the confidence of the Apoſtle in the text, that I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God; yet I can ſay, with as much ſincerity as he felt, that I have not deſignedly neglected it. And if the moſt ardent wiſhes for your preſent peace and proſperity, and for your future and eternal glory and happineſs, will juſtify the aſſertion, I can ſay, that I am pure from the blood of all men. I have wiſhed and prayed for your good, but I have never had in my heart to injure any individual of you. And though my ſervices and my ſufferings, my prayers and my tears, may not be felt or acknowledged by my fellow men; yet I have the heart-animating ſatisfaction of reflecting with holy Job, "that my witneſs is in heaven, and that my record is on high." With him, "I know that my Redeemer lives."

Many, my friends, have been the evils with which I have been called to encounter, from my firſt entering upon the work of the goſpel in this place. The envenomed tongue of the moſt malicious ſlander has been employed to wound my fame; my moſt ſtudious exertions to aſſert and maintain, what I have received as the truths

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of the goſpel, have been deſpiſed by ſome as the warm effuſions of an heretical brain. And my firm adherence to an incumbent duty has been conſtrued into obſtinacy, and imputed to the want of an obliging diſpoſition. Sincere in my conceſſions, and ſanguine in my expectations, I have been betrayed in my confidence; and ſeen all my faireſt proſpects in a moment blaſted. And now, ſhall I ſay that none of theſe things move me? and that neither do I count my life dear unto myſelf? Yes, I will truly ſay it, if I may but finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God.

My brethren, I have no unfriendly paſſion to gratify. I have no diſpoſition to revenge upon the moſt unfeeling of my enemies. I will not even ſay of them (as St. Paul ſaid of Alexander the copper-ſmith) they have done me much evil, the Lord reward them according to their works. No, but I will leave them with their God, and pray for the ſalvation of their ſouls. I have no doubt, but that many who have taken a part in afflicting me, have been led to it through miſ-information, or the want of proper attention, or by the influence of bad adviſers; which therefore, I can freely overlook, and heartily forgive.

This world, my friends, is not our home, and when compared with the glories that are to be revealed, its intereſts are not worth contending for. We are deſigned for another ſtate of exiſ-

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tence; this life is but the dawn of that eternal day, to which we are as yet ſcarcely awakened. We enter upon this ſtage of mortality in a promiſcuous order; we here form various connexions which muſt be all of ſhort duration. Diſaſter or death ſoon diſunites us for a time; but we part, ſoon to meet again.

You and I, my friends, have been connected under the moſt intereſting and important of all relations; it is now diſſolved. Perhaps this is the laſt time we ſhall ever behold each others faces upon earth. This is undoubtedly the laſt time you will ever hear my voice from this ſacred deſk. But, my friends, we ſoon ſhall meet again; at the moment of our ſeparation, we are all haſtening, as faſt as the wings of time can carry us, to unite with a whole aſſembled world, before the impartial bar of the dread Sovereign of the univerſe; whoſe piercing eye now ſearches the human heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. Yes, my friends, we muſt ſhortly, very ſhortly, all appear before our Judge; where our late relation to each other will be brought into view. Where I muſt give an account of the errors of my life, and for every neglect of my duty as a miniſter of the goſpel of the grace of God; and where you, my friends, muſt likewiſe give an account of the temper and diſpoſition with which you have attended on my miniſtry, and the manner in which you have profited under it; and where you muſt account not only for

your conduct towards me as a chriſtian brother and a chriſtian miniſter; but likewiſe for the motives which actuated you thereto. With pleaſing hope and grateful expectation, I look forward to the events of that all-important period; and may God of his infinite compaſſion and grace diſpoſe and enable each of us ſo to rectify whatever has been amiſs, either in our temper or conduct, as that the approaching day of final retribution may be as happy as it muſt be ſolemn to us all.

But though this life is not the time to revenge injuries, but to forgive, and if poſſible, to forget them; yet ſurely it is a fit ſeaſon for the grateful acknowledgment of benefits and kindneſſes. And therefore, it is with pleaſure, that I take this opportunity publicly to acknowledge the many and repeated expreſſions of friendſhip and eſteem which I have received from many of the people of this pariſh, from my firſt coming among them to the preſent day. Be aſſured, my friends, not the ſmalleſt token of your kindneſs has been paſſed unnoticed. I have a lively remembrance of all your favors, it will accompany me wherever I go, and through whatever ſcenes I may be called to paſs. Although I may be loſt to you, yet your friendſhip is not loſt upon me, it has made ſuch a deep impreſſion upon my heart, as can never be eraſed, until it is aſleep in the cold and ſilent grave. Accept my ſincere thanks and moſt devout good wiſhes; they are the only returns that are now in my power to make to all your benevolence: but they are a grateful offering, which a generous mind will not deſpiſe.

It now remains, that I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are ſanctified.

You have now a dangerous path to tread, without any ſpiritual guide to go before you in the exerciſes of public devotion. The Apoſtle, in our context, was extremely anxious for the peace and ſecurity of his beloved flock at Epheſus, when he could no longer be with them. For I know this, ſaid he, that after my departing, ſhall grievous wolves enter in among you, not ſparing the flock. Alſo of yourſelves ſhall men ariſe, ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw away diſciples after them. And, have I no longer any intereſt in you, my friends? God is my witneſs, who daily hears my prayers for his bleſſings on you, that I have. Ye are now my brethren, who ſo lately were the people of my charge. And as we are now about to take our leave of each other, to purſue (as I humbly hope) our journey to our heavenly Father's houſe; I will offer you the parting caution which Joſeph gave to his brethren, when they left him, to go up from Egypt, to their father in Canaan.

"And he ſaid unto them, ſee that ye fall not "out by the way." Let me entreat you to forget all former prejudices, and endeavour to be reconciled to one other. Seek a ſpeedy reſettlement of the goſpel among you, with ſincere deſires to

profit by the dispensation of its doctrines and its precepts. If you can be united, you may yet be a happy and a respectable society. But if malice and ill-will, if prejudice, hatred and revenge, and every unfriendly and destructive passion are not speedily suppressed, your ruin is unavoidable. Studiously avoid therefore, all movements towards confusion and disorder. Study the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Seek to have the word of God dispensed to you in its purity, and cherish the faith that was once delivered to the saints. You have more pressing motives to peace and union among yourselves, and more important considerations to prevent your falling out with each other, on your journey through the wilderness of this life, than the brethren of Joseph had, while they journeyed towards their native land.

You are all the offspring of God; the parent of the universe is the former of your bodies, and the father of your spirits; he regards you as his children; he knows your infirmities, and is graciously attentive to your wants: Your existence originated in his love, and you are all equally dependent on his bounty. He views no individual with a partial fondness, further than amiableness of temper, and propriety of conduct, may justly merit the distinction; but, as a kind and indulgent parent, he delights in the peace and happiness of all his children. The relation, therefore, in which you all stand to God should remind

mind you of the relation you bear to each other, and ſhould teach you to cheriſh that fraternal affection, which ſhould be mutually exerciſed among brethren. And you are expreſsly exhorted to the cultivation of brotherly love by the great Redeemer of the world; who, that he might reconcile the children of men to one another, and ſo prepare them for a reconciliation with offended Heaven, became an inſtructor and an example in this important duty; and has left it as the indiſputable evidence by which we are to prove that we are his diſciples.—"For as I have loved you," ſaid Chriſt, "ſo ought ye alſo to love one ano-"ther." And "by this ſhall all men know that "ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to another." What a powerful motive ſhould this be with you, to ſuppreſs every unchriſtian and unfriendly thought, and on every occaſion to manifeſt mutual love, kindneſs and compaſſion.

In innumerable inſtances we have all tranſgreſſed againſt the righteous laws of God; and the need we all ſtand in of his forgiveneſs ſhould teach us the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of our being willing to forgive thoſe who may have offended us. And in our addreſſes at the throne of grace, we are expreſsly taught by our bleſſed Lord, to pray for the forgiveneſs of our own ſins, on condition of our being freely diſpoſed to forgive thoſe who ſin againſt us; and are aſſured, that "if we for-"give not men their treſpaſſes, neither will our "heavenly father forgive us our treſpaſſes."

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While on earth, you are all, my friends, in a ſtate of pilgrimage; profeſſedly journeying to the ſame eternal home; and whatever different ſubordinate views you may each of you have here, yet your principal and ultimate view is the ſame. The heavenly Jeruſalem is the place at which you all hope to arrive. And Heaven, let it be remembered, admits none of thoſe jarring diſcords, feuds and confuſions which diſturb the peace and happineſs of the preſent ſtate; that is the bleſſed abode of peace, of joy, and everlaſting love. No rankled temper, no ruffled paſſions, no diſconſonant or unfriendly thought, ſhall ever be found among the ſaints in light: But felicity and truth, amity and love, complacency and peace, delight and concord, will be the invariable temper of all the ſons of glory. And if the temper or conduct of any of your fellow travellers occaſion you any preſent vexation or concern, let this thought afford you comfort and relief, that if ever you meet them in heaven, you will find them ſo entirely reformed as that you ſhall cheerfully embrace them for your moſt cordial friends.

"There are two things which have a direct "and a moſt unhappy tendency to foment an "unfriendly ſpirit, and prompt men to a viola- "tion of the great laws of chriſtian charity, viz. "Unruly paſſions and unreaſonable prejudices. "When theſe are indulged ſo far as to break "through the reſtraints of conſcience and of "honour, it is no wonder if we ſee perſons un- "der the government of them frequently find-

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" ing fault with the beſt men, and the beſt things.
" From hence aroſe that implacable hatred which
" the Jews ſhewed to our Saviour's perſon, and
" the violent oppoſition they made to his doc-
" trines, and which the bigotted and profane part
" of mankind have in ſome degree ſhewn to his
" true cauſe and faithful ſervants ever ſince.
" And even good men, ſo far as they are under
" the unhappy influence of them, always diſcover
" either a very unlovely temper, or very erroneous
" principles. Firſt then, if you would preſerve
" and cultivate a ſpirit of unanimity and peace,
" you muſt guard againſt intemperate paſſions,
" and eſpecially againſt thoſe, which are moſt apt
" to predominate. Paſſion is always a blind and
" a furious guide; and if it is not ſanctified by
" grace, or ſubdued by reaſon, proves exceed-
" ingly detrimental to a man's peace and intereſt.
" It was deſigned to be the ſervant of reaſon,
" and to follow after it; but if inſtead of being
" obedient to it, it once gains the aſcendency
" over it, it hurries a man into the wildeſt ex-
" tremes, and renders him either a very contemp-
" tible or a very dangerous enemy; and like an
" unbridled, headſtrong horſe, overleaps all the
" bounds of religion, reaſon, humanity, common
" ſenſe, or common decency, that ſtands in the
" way of its mad career.

" And unreaſonable prejudice is equally detri-
" mental to the intereſts of peace and brotherly
" love. Prejudice is a precipitant determination

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" of the mind for, or againſt any particular object,
" previous to a proper enquiry into its nature;
" or, as the word itſelf imports, to judge before
" we examine; that is to judge by the paſſions
" rather than the underſtanding. Hence we ſee
" that perſons of the warmeſt paſſions are fre-
" quently the moſt ſubject to this foible. And
" opinions thus raſhly taken up, without evidence,
" are called prejudices. And they are moſt fre-
" quently the effect of ignorance and vanity united;
" and moſt incident to perſons of quick and con-
" fident ſpirits, who have not patience to examine
" the premiſes, before they draw the concluſion.
" And then, through a weak miſtaken notion,
" that it is diſhonorable to be convinced of an
" error, reſolve for the credit of their underſtand-
" ing, as they ſuppoſe (but really at the expenſe
" of it) to retain and defend their error againſt
" all evidence of ſenſe, fact and reaſon. But this
" not only expoſes a man's underſtanding, but
" renders him a very unſociable creature; an
" uncharitable chriſtian, if a chriſtian; or an ob-
" ſtinate infidel if not. And where paſſion and
" prejudice both unite their influence, they make
" a man unſufferably arrogant and aſſuming. If
" therefore you would cultivate peace and love,
" you muſt guard equally againſt unruly paſſions
" and unreaſonable prejudices; and the more
" carefully, becauſe they are both apt to ſteal in-
" to the mind unobſerved." Reſolve freely and candidly to examine, before you judge of any thing that is propoſed to your faith; and let

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reaſon and the ſacred ſcriptures furniſh the rules by which you make up your judgment. But always remember to maintain the truth in love, becauſe the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.

And may God Almighty, my friends, take you under his holy protection, and may his good Spirit lead you into all neceſſary truth.

It would greatly rejoice my heart, could I ſee you happily united, in the enjoyment of all the bleſſings of the goſpel of the grace of God. And I earneſtly pray, that it may pleaſe the great Head of the Church ſoon to ſend you a paſtor after his own heart; who ſhall lead you into the green paſtures of his word, and beſide the ſtill waters of his grace.

As for me, I caſt myſelf, and thoſe for whom God and nature command me to be provident, upon the infinite compaſſion of that kind and indulgent parent, who hears the young ravens when they cry, and without whoſe notice even a ſparrow falls not to the ground.

Finally, my brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace ſhall be with you and bleſs you.

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